

STATEMENT BY PATRICIA M. HASLACH
Ambassador-designate, U.S. Senior Official for APEC
BEFORE THE U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS
APRIL 9, 2008

Madam Chairman, Ranking Member Murkowski, and Members of the Committee, I am deeply honored to appear before you today to seek confirmation as U.S. Senior Official for APEC with the rank of Ambassador. I appreciate the confidence that President Bush and Secretary Rice have shown in me by this nomination. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to work with you to advance U.S. interests through APEC.

The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) is strategically important to the United States. It is the premier venue for engaging the Asia-Pacific region on economic and other issues. The 21 members of APEC together account for 60 percent of U.S. exports, 60 percent of global GDP, 50 percent of world trade, and nearly 3 billion consumers. APEC is the only trans-Pacific forum that includes the United States and meets annually at the head of state level, with President Bush having attended every APEC Leaders meeting since taking office. It also brings together other top officials throughout the year to address an array of important issues.

While these facts alone demonstrate the significance of the forum, APEC is more than the sum of its statistics. APEC is a vibrant organization that works to enhance the well-being of the United States and the Asia-Pacific in practical and tangible ways. With little fanfare, APEC is playing an important role in promoting economic growth, opening markets for U.S. business, and ensuring our security. If confirmed as U.S. Senior Official for APEC with the rank of Ambassador, I will work vigorously to strengthen the organization, particularly as the United States prepares to host APEC in 2011.

Promoting U.S. trade and economic growth

Madam Chairman, APEC has made real progress in breaking down barriers to American goods and services, as well as addressing an array of issues that are important to U.S. manufacturers, service providers, workers, farmers, and ranchers.

- Over the years, APEC has offered strong support to concluding the Doha Round of multilateral trade talks, especially at critical junctures. In March, at their first meeting of 2008, APEC Senior Officials issued a strong statement noting the recent positive developments in the Doha Round and

committing to work towards an ambitious and balanced outcome that delivers real commercial gains.

- APEC is also at the front-and-center in the trend towards economic integration in the Asia Pacific, a critical ingredient for building prosperity and stability in the region. A key component of this effort is APEC's work to actively explore the long-term vision of a Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), which would allow Americans to compete on a more level playing field in the world's most dynamic economic region.
- In addition, APEC has made important progress in addressing an array of issues to further facilitate trade and economic growth in the Asia Pacific. This includes establishing guidelines to promote the development of high-quality FTAs in the region, increase protection of intellectual property rights, and reduce the costs of conducting trade that hinder American businesses – especially small businesses – from fully participating in the regional marketplace.
- APEC also expedites the travel of senior business people and government officials throughout the region using the APEC Business Travel Card program. This program provides eligible individuals with speedier processing at airport immigration lines in participating APEC economies.

There is still unfulfilled potential in our trade relationship with Asia. America must participate constructively in the process of economic integration that is already transforming the region, or risk becoming disadvantaged and isolated. If I am confirmed with the rank of Ambassador, I will work to utilize the tools and opportunities provided by APEC to ensure that our country will be a part of the extraordinary dynamism of the Asia-Pacific, and in a way that benefits all Americans.

Building and securing prosperous societies

At the same time, addressing economic issues alone does not guarantee growth. We must also foster an overall environment where prosperity can occur.

- This is why APEC is helping economies to construct transparent regulatory institutions, combat corruption, and promote education. It is also why APEC is working to ensure that all members of society can prosper from regional trade and investment. Madam Chairman, you might be interested to know that APEC members, including the United States, are particularly

committed to women's economic empowerment and have made it an important criterion in the approval of APEC-sponsored projects.

- APEC is also contributing to the global response to energy security and climate change. Utilizing its strengths as the region's preeminent economic forum, APEC is working to achieve regional goals in such areas as improving energy efficiency, promoting alternative energy sources, and fostering the development and trade of clean technologies. These activities include an effort in APEC to promote trade of environmental goods and services.
- Furthermore, APEC has made important contributions to protect the region from security threats that could harm economic growth. With the United States in the lead, APEC has helped to improve the security of airports and seaports, counter terrorism, and confront avian influenza.

I want to emphasize that APEC is not just a forum for talking about policy solutions to economic challenges; it also works in practical terms to translate ideas into action. In particular, APEC undertakes technical cooperation programs that help our trade partners to implement their commitments and improve the economic life of people throughout the region. This is one of the main reasons why President Bush committed in 2006 to augment U.S. funding for APEC. With financial contributions from the U.S. and other members, APEC is implementing projects in a wide range of areas, including education, energy, emergency preparedness, anti-counterfeiting, and economic reform. APEC's partnership with the region's private sector, including many of its leading companies, also ensures that its initiatives are focused, constructive, and of tangible benefit to U.S. businesses.

Peru 2008 and the future

Peru's hosting of the forum in 2008 underscores the trans-Pacific nature of APEC and enables us to tackle emerging challenges while highlighting the growing economic ties between Latin America and Asia.

- APEC will be working to increase economies' capacity to protect against unsafe food and other products, an issue of immense concern to U.S. consumers. The U.S. believes that APEC is uniquely suited for addressing this issue, since our key regional trade partners – including China – are active members. APEC will implement a major program this year to identify strategies for improving food safety and is looking to pursue more initiatives that will strengthen regional capabilities to protect consumers.

- APEC will focus on ways to address concerns in both developed and developing economies about globalization, including access to education and workplace skills needed to succeed in the global economy.
- APEC will also work to promote corporate social responsibility in the Asia-Pacific, since we know that good corporate citizenship has a positive impact for both the people of the region as well as for the business community.

Madam Chairman, I also want to highlight that in 2011 the United States will be hosting APEC for the first time in 18 years. This is a tremendous opportunity for our country. As the host economy, it will be an excellent chance to promote U.S. business and investment opportunities and define an agenda for regional prosperity that reflects our values. This will be a major undertaking, and I look forward to working with Congress to make this important event successful.

Conclusion

If I am confirmed with the rank of Ambassador, I promise to put my experience and enthusiasm to work in advancing U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific. During my twenty-two years in the U.S. Foreign Service, I have developed an intimate knowledge of Asia, having served as Ambassador to Laos between 2004 and 2007, and in the Economic Section of the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia during the 1990s. Together with my other experience working on economic issues in South Asia, Africa, and Europe, I am prepared to tackle the broad range of economic issues with our fellow APEC members.

Madam Chairman, it would be a great privilege to serve my country as U.S. Senior Official for APEC with the rank of Ambassador. APEC is a truly unique and irreplaceable asset to the American people, and I am ready to help the United States strengthen the organization as an engine of growth and opportunity in the Asia-Pacific.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.